



Getting the Lead Out— Creating New Opportunities in the Old Lead Belt

MINERAL AREA COLLEGE

Residents of the Old Lead Belt counties of Madison and St. Francois, Missouri, are being offered new career opportunities through EPA's first rural Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilot. The Pilot has completed its first training cycle and graduated 13 students, all of whom are currently employed. Because of its rural location, the Pilot has faced several challenges, including participant retention and transportation issues. In order to overcome these obstacles, the Pilot has leveraged resources and partnered with local entities that provide students with unique opportunities such as a ride-share program.

Mineral Area College (MAC) in Park Hills, Missouri, was selected by EPA for a Job Training Pilot in May 1999 and received a two-year, \$200,000 grant. To date, EPA has awarded 37 Job Training and Development Demonstration Pilots across the country. The purpose of these Pilots is to facilitate cleanup of brownfield sites and prepare trainees for a career in the environmental field. Job Training Pilots are located either within or adjacent to Brownfields Assessment Pilot areas; the MAC Pilot is associated with the Bonne Terre Assessment Pilot located in St. Francois County.

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JUST THE FACTS:

- The Pilot trains participants in mine waste site assessment and cleanup, emphasizing the use of innovative technologies.
- One graduate of the MAC job training program moved from an entry-level cleanup job paying \$10 an hour to a \$29-per-hour position within two months.
- The State of Missouri contributed \$400,000 toward construction of a state-of-the-art environmental training facility.

In order to overcome trainee retention and transportation issues, the Pilot leveraged resources and partnered with local entities to provide students with unique opportunities such as a ride-share program.

EPA's Brownfields Economic Redevelopment Initiative is designed to empower states, communities, and other stakeholders in economic redevelopment to work together in a timely manner to prevent, assess, safely clean up, and sustainably reuse brownfields. A brownfield is a site, or portion thereof, that has actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment or reuse. EPA is funding: assessment demonstration pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to assess brownfields sites and to test cleanup and redevelopment models; job training pilot programs (each funded up to \$200,000 over two years), to provide training for residents of communities affected by brownfields to facilitate cleanup of brownfields sites and prepare trainees for future employment in the environmental field; and, cleanup revolving loan fund programs (each funded up to \$500,000 over five years) to capitalize loan funds to make loans for the environmental cleanup of brownfields. These pilot programs are intended to provide EPA, states, tribes, municipalities, and communities with useful information and strategies as they continue to seek new methods to promote a unified approach to site assessment, environmental cleanup, and redevelopment.

Madison and St. Francois counties (combined population of 25,000), located 60 miles south of St. Louis in the Ozarks, are suffering with a depressed economy due to the demise of the area's lead mining industry. Nearly 300 years of lead mining left behind more than 3,000 acres of exposed mine tailings and hundreds of acres of brownfields, making the area appear undesirable for new business. As a result, the area's poverty and unemployment rates are significantly higher than state and national averages.

The Pilot grant awarded to MAC provides valuable environmental training to residents who are recruited from low-income communities in the area and who are often involved in the Welfare-to-Work and Trade Readjustment Act (TRA) programs. The Pilot trains participants in mine waste site assessment and cleanup, emphasizing the use of innovative technologies such as phytoremediation of lead, sludge applications, in situ soil flushing, and phytostabilization. Students get hands-on experience through access to sites targeted by the Bonne Terre Assessment Pilot for study and fieldwork. Graduates of the program receive Brownfields Worker Certification and can apply their training toward an associate's degree in environment, health, and safety at MAC or another institution.

All of the program's graduates to date have found employment. One graduate immediately began work with an environmental placement firm and, through commitment and hard work, moved from an entry-level cleanup job paying \$10 an hour to a \$29-per-hour position within two months. Her foreman commented that she and her fellow MAC job training graduates had the finest environmental knowledge base out of any technicians he had seen in years.

The Pilot has also been successful in leveraging funds and other resources to support the program. The State of Missouri contributed \$400,000 toward construction of a state-of-the-art training facility, which is now completed. In addition, the East Missouri Action Agency and the Unitec Career Center are providing life skills and remedial training, such as GED, math, and English "brush up" courses for incoming trainees, and is helping to reimburse qualified trainees for transportation and book costs. For more information on the Mineral Area College Job Training Pilot, contact Shawn Grindstaff, Mineral Area College, (573) 518-2153.

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